

Expert: Energy Drink Company's Studies on Their Products May Downplay Dangers



Much of the research that concludes energy drinks are not harmful has been funded by Red Bull, says an expert who warns the findings of these studies may downplay the drinks' dangers.

In this week's issue of the British Medical Journal, Dr. Peter Miller, Associate Professor of Psychology at Deakin University in Australia, writes that the studies funded by the energy drink company have investigated whether the drinks worsen the harms from alcohol consumption when they are used together, Fox News reports.

"Epidemiological studies show that drinkers who consume energy drinks are more likely to record a higher breath alcohol concentration than those who do not," Miller wrote. "They are also more likely to report drinking more alcohol; engaging in aggressive acts; being injured; symptoms of alcohol dependence; having driven while drunk or been a passenger in a car with an alcohol impaired driver; and having taken sexual advantage of, or having been taken advantage of, by another person."

He added, "The public needs to be critical consumers of research, especially research that is funded or quoted by parties with vested interests. We still don't know if energy drinks cause harm, and the current experimental evidence is unable to explain the worrying epidemiological findings we have."

In his editorial, Miller noted researchers funded by Red Bull have presented their findings at special sessions on alcohol and energy drinks at international conferences where audiences may not be aware of the extent of their industry sponsorship.

In January, the government released a report that found the number of emergency room visits involving energy drinks doubled from 2007 to 2011, reaching more than 20,000. During that period, the popularity of energy drinks has surged on college campuses, and in bars and convenience stores. About 42 percent of emergency room cases in 2011 involved energy drinks combined with alcohol or drugs such as Adderall or Ritalin.